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ABSTRACT

It is pointed out in this discussion of the challenges and difficulties of athletic promotional activities that it is important to realize that improving the overall image of the intercollegiate athletic program should be conducted in a way that is supportive of the total educational and non-educational missions of the institution in which the athletic program is positioned. It is essential that an overall, global athletic marketing plan be developed and nurtured. Such a plan should be established through a meaningful, realistic and accurate assessment or evaluation process which identifies the needs and limitations or parameters as well as the attributes or resources of the athletic entity. To the extent that an athletic department's promotional activities, fund raising tactics and image enhancing efforts are concerned, it is important that these activities be part of an overall approved college-wide plan. A list of factors to consider in the implementation of athletic promotional activities is presented, and 20 specific techniques for promotional activities are presented. (JD)

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PROMOTIONAL TECHNIQUES FOR THE SMALL BUDGET

(There Is More To Athletic Promotions Than Meets the Eye)

Presentation at the national NCAA
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Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Washington, D.C.

One of the most important, visible and difficult challenges -- or interesting opportunities, if you will --facing those involved in Intercollegiate Athletics centers around what is popularly referred to as PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES. One of the challenges or difficulties associated with the phrase ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES is that the words themselves are difficult to accurately define and often mean different things to different people, at different times, in different circumstances.

What *do* the words ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES mean? *We all think we know what we mean* when we use these words and they are battered about frequently enough; *but, that is no guarantee that there is agreement with the definition(s)* or that those with whom we are attempting to communicate with fully understand what we mean. Do the words merely define attempts to raise funds (picking up nickels, quarters, or dollars)? More on this later. Do they merely mean attempting to generate increased positive publicity? Do they merely describe activities which are designed to create a positive public image? Do they merely include public relations activities? Do they merely denote an attempt to promote a program, an activity, or an idea? Do they merely define activities geared specifically towards the cultivation of

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the institution's alumni/ae? Or, do they include all of the above, and then some?

For purposes of this gathering today, lets assume that ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES are those *which are planned* for the purpose of *improving the overall image of the intercollegiate athletic program and which are supportive of the total educational and non-educational missions of the institution in which the athletic program is positioned.* Such activities could indeed involve fund raising activities, such activities might include tactics designed to garner increased publicity, and such activities could describe techniques designed to increase awareness and acceptance, on behalf of various constituencies (including alumni), of the intercollegiate athletic program and/or the total institution.

In other words, depending upon the individual circumstances one finds oneself in, all of the activities mentioned above could be correctly considered, at various times, to be ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES.

One word of caution is due. There is a significant difference between the so-called isolated, fragmented promotional or fund raising type effort and a *planned*, coordinated *system or strategy* of promotional activities *designed to achieve objectives on a more global scale.* How many of us, who are here today, are or have been caught up in the rat race of conducting multiple, isolated and fragmented fund raising tasks without the benefit of an overall, global **Marketing Plan?**

It is essential that an overall, global athletic **Marketing Plan** (compatible with the institution's missions) be developed and nurtured. Such a plan should be established through a meaningful, realistic and accurate *ASSESSMENT or EVALUATION PROCESS* which identifies the needs and the limitations or parameters as well as the attributes or resources of the

athletic entity. The goal of the **Marketing Plan** is the creation of a road map to guide the staff members' actions towards the ultimate objective, i.e., the creation of a more visible entity, a more positive public image, a more viable and attractive athletic program, solvent both in terms of financial resources and in terms of human resources.

In terms of the planning and the implementation of various types of promotional activities (including fund raising), there are other entities or offices, with different if not conflicting needs and viewpoints or perspectives, within the college and university which must be taken into account. Specifically, the alumni office, the foundation office, the development office, the office of public relations, as well as selected academic units, to name only a few. Athletic administrators must remain sensitive to the concerns of administrators of each of these other entities. These administrative officers often view (and, sometimes, with good reasons) athletic administrators who "attempt to dabble" in such areas as fund raising, promotional techniques, alumni contacts, public relations and publicity as the ENEMY, COMPETITION, INTERLOPERS, INTRUDERS, or worse.

One of the significant administrative challenges, in terms of successful involvement in ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, is often, far too often, within the confines of one's own campus. That is, athletic administrators experience difficulty in dealing with their own administrative peers and with members of the higher administration in the justification of their involvement and/or their desires to implement specific courses of actions associated with the general area of fund raising, promotions, alumni/ae contact, public relations, publicity, etc., under the so-called umbrella of a **Marketing Plan**.

This is where the pre-planning and organizational skills of athletic

administrators and athletic staff come into play. If the ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, in which athletic administrators would like to become involved, are to be approved or condoned (officially or unofficially) by the "powers to be" within the institution, athletic administrators must be capable of justifying the need and advisability for such activities to peers and supervisors. That is the task, the objective.

The phrase used earlier, "picking up nickels, quarters, dollars," refers to the setting of priorities in terms of who is to do what, when and with whom, for what purposes, within the fund raising umbrella? Who would want 15 head coaches and their teams, on a team by team basis, on their own, to attempt to sell Christmas ornaments to area merchants during the month of December? No one, for three basic reasons. First, there obviously would be a saturation of the market for this one item of merchandise. Second, the merchants would soon tire of being constantly bombarded by numerous entities from the same source, i.e., athletics. Third, the coaches would be picking up mere "nickels" from merchants who might then be reluctant to follow their earlier ("nickel") financial contribution with additional and much larger contributions ("quarters"), made at the bequest of the athletic director. Thus, coaches who pick up "nickels" could conceivably hinder those athletic administrators who could be picking up "quarters" from these same constituents.

However, this line of thinking, taken one logical step further, has rather significant implications and creates very real complications for athletic administrators. That is, the central administrators concerned with fund raising, with promotional activities, with publicity, with public relations, with alumni relations, and with creating a positive image of the total institution with the numerous publics -- do not want representatives

from the ATHLETIC ARENA picking up either "nickels" (coaches) or "quarters" (athletic administrators) when the central administrative officers are desirous of picking up "dollars" from the same people, from the same organizations. This is true whether we are speaking of activities associated with fund raising, public relations, alumni, publicity, etc. It is for the same very reason (fear of merely picking up "nickels" or "quarters" rather than "dollars") that the central offices and administrative heads involved in fund raising, alumni support, public relations, publicity, etc., react negatively to situations which they view as encroachment upon their turf. Is it any wonder?

Thus, to the extent that an athletic department's PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, FUND RAISING TACTICS and IMAGE ENHANCING EFFORTS are concerned, it is absolutely essential that these activities be part of an overall, approved college wide plan of attack. No, this is not suggesting that every single activity (associated with promotions, fund raising, publicity, public relations, etc.) of the athletic department must be scrutinized and approved by outside forces. What is indicated, however, is that there is a need for the athletic department, in the planning and the implementation of so-called ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, to cease acting and competing like the Lone Ranger and to begin to *act as a member of the institutional team*, which is concerned with the areas of publicity, image enhancement, public relations, fund raising, promotional activities, etc. Only through such close cooperation can the athletic department survive unscathed internally and externally in its efforts to achieve objectives which may be facilitated by specific promotional type activities.

The ultimate objective, from the athletic administrator's point of view, is to PROMOTE, to SELL, to PRESENT AN IMAGE, to CREATE A NEED and to then

PROVIDE A MEANS TO SATISFY THAT NEED. Athletic administrators are involved, almost on a daily basis, either with creating ideas (working on the abstract or conceptual level) and/or implementing these promotional concepts (working on the concrete or reality level). This is just the nature of the beast.

Lets face it, there are a million and one different techniques, tactics and activities which have been and/or can be utilized by athletic personnel to help PROMOTE, MARKET, SELL, and SUPPORT intercollegiate athletic programs.

Today, the purpose of this meeting is to elicit from those in attendance, some of those basic concepts, those ideas and techniques which have proved to be both feasible and successful on other campuses, especially those activities and techniques which have been completed in spite of limited resources (money, personnel, time, facilities, etc.), all under the umbrella of the institution. One caveat. It must be remembered that successful promotional activities are far easier talked about than implemented. There are an awful lot of 3 o'clock wonders who talk a great game, but don't actually produce, at the scheduled 7 p.m. tip-off. Talk is indeed cheap.

Prior to opening up the floor to discussion, let me share -- as food for thought -- some variables or factors which might be taken into consideration when contemplating various promotional type activities, followed by a listing of specific athletic promotion techniques.

Factors to Consider (Decisions to Make) in the Implementation of Athletic Promotional Activities

(a) Utilization of one's own staff or outside experts (head hunters) in terms of cost effectiveness.

(b) College/university wide restrictions (philosophical orientation).

(c) Multiple fund raising activities versus the single project concept.

(d) Establishment of realistic and defensible priorities and timetable(s) for promotional activities.

(e) Evaluation of the effectiveness of such activities from internal and external perspectives.

(f) Determination of what is and what is not marketable (can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear).

(g) Definitive understanding of the responsibility and reasonable expectations of the athletic administrator within the area of promotional activity.

(h) Maintenance of a minimum level of competency and sophistication (do it with class, maintaining a non-high school mentality) in all such activities.

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES FOR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Some of the specific athletic fund raising activities which have been successful, part of the million and one, include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Raffles and Reverse Raffles.

(b) Basketball half-time field goal attempts (from mid-court), for $10,000.00 or a free car (covered by insurance).

(c) Ice hockey "shot at the goal" between periods for special prizes.

(d) Special "Freak Out nights" for athletic contests (special dress up activities) -- prizes for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.

(e) Golf outing (the selling of "tees" and "greens"). (f) Creation of special support groups for individual athletic sports or for the total

athletic sport program.

(g) Naming of buildings for financial benefactors. Naming of "anything" and "everything" for financial benefactors.

(h) Creation of an Athletic Hall of Fame.

(i) Establishment of scholarships in individuals' names.

(j) Selling corporate sponsorships of tournaments.

(k) Other types of company or organizational or corporate involvement and sponsorship.

(l) Car Washes, selling of T-Shirts, towels, hats, what have you.

(m) Selling of program ads, advertisement on schedule cards, etc.

(n) Tail Gate parties, pre-game, post-game and half-time activities.

(o) Development of an approved LOGO (licensed).
The selling of the use of the athletic LOGO to vendors, merchandisers, etc.

(p) Operation of concessions and the marketing/selling of merchandise, athletic apparel.

(q) Exchanging tickets (if marketable) on trade-outs with merchants and/or with media.

(r) Piggy-back promotion of one sport program or sport (not as popular) with another (more popular)

(s) Creation and enforcement of rules and regulations (expectations) pertaining to the student-athletes and staff members -- the ambassadors of our athletic program, both on and off campus.

(t) Maintenance of visible portions of the athletic program (facilities, equipment, staff, athletes, communications, etc.), in a proper fashion.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, it is essential that those of us who serve as athletic administrators and who are involved with the promotional aspects of our programs remain conscious of the cost effectiveness (financial, time, effort, etc.) of our efforts and our staff's efforts. It *may be* far better not to do anything than to do it poorly. This philosophy of doing it well or not doing it at all might be one which many of our athletic programs should consider adopting, especially in response to the present, hostile climate facing athletics on many college campuses.

Similarly, there needs to be a realistic determination of exactly what and who we are and the role of our own athletic program in the scheme of higher education and intercollegiate athletics. Athletic programs can't be all things to all people. There are indeed real differences, involving resources and limitations, existing between institutions and athletic programs on the NCAA I, IAA, II, III, NAIA, NCCAA, NJCAA, and NLCAA levels. It is essential that individual athletic administrators recognize their position in the pecking order within the institution and within the hierarchy of the athletic world, with whatever resources (financial, personnel, facilities, image, etc.) are available or which might be mustered.

The bottom line responsibility of the college and university athletic Administrator, insofar as ATHLETIC PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES are concerned, is to seek to create ideas and concepts, to initiate actions, to cultivate, titillate and motivate as well as to educate constituencies so that athletic programs might captivate their interests and loyalties and thus facilitate the solicitation of both tangible (concrete) and intangible (moral) support. *It does not hurt one little bit if the administrator also happens to walk on water in her/his spare time.*

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